

Encountering Jesus Pt 3

Ashamed to Forgiven

Luke 7:36-50

This morning I want to continue on in our study of “Encountering Jesus” and take a look at another story of how Jesus impacted those around him. We have so far seen how Jesus has changed one from fear to freedom and another from rejection to acceptance. When you experience the life changing touch of Jesus and his forgiveness given through his death on the cross, you cannot help but be changed.

There is a trap that awaits those who get use to the kindness of God. As people who tend to put others in a box, we tend do the same with God and we label or confine what God’s kindness really looks like – in our limited thoughts and mindsets we fall short in defining the kindness of God and forget the immense, spectacular grace that has and continues to be shown to us. We forget where we have come from and just how incredible the mercy and grace of God really is.

With this in mind we pick up our story in Luke 7:36-50, a story about a sinful woman who anoints Jesus’ feet, but can I venture out and say it is also a story about a man, a Pharisee, who has lost sight of the kindness of God. Let’s look at **Luke 7:36-38**:

36 One of the Pharisees asked him over for a meal. He went to the Pharisee's house and sat down at the dinner table. 37 Just then a woman of the village, the town harlot, having learned that Jesus was a guest in the home of the Pharisee, came with a bottle of very expensive perfume 38 and stood at his feet, weeping, raining tears on his feet. Letting down her hair, she dried his feet, kissed them, and anointed them with the perfume.

While the Pharisee, by the name of Simon, invited Jesus over to his house for dinner, there is an unexpected, un-welcomed, unclean, and unwise guest who enters the home. A prostitute – the sort of person that Jesus would invite – the sinful, the outcast, the unaccepted and the unloved. This woman had a reputation – the town harlot. And yet something changes the heart of this woman that causes here to overstep cultural, religious, and social boundaries to minister to Jesus – the forgiveness of God. Jesus said in **Matthew 9:12-15**:

12 Jesus said "Who needs a doctor: the healthy or the sick? 13 Go figure out what this Scripture means: 'I'm after mercy, not religion.' I'm here to invite outsiders, not coddle insiders."

Jesus came for those who need him. **And when you truly understand the extent of the love of God, the extent of his great mercy, and the extent of his living and active grace, you will over step cultural, religious and social boundaries to minister to God.** Although the gesture of Simon’s invitation for dinner was welcomed, the sacrificial,

humbling, and authentic act of the prostitute touched the heart of God, she need him and Jesus knew it.

Can it be said that we can become too comfortable with the graciousness of God, take it for granted, and treat our daily worship of God as just another thing on our schedule?

Can it be said that we can have a tendency of civilizing our faith in Jesus, and neglecting the raw and authentic expression of real faith and love, instead wondering what others may think of us instead of being awed by our raw expression of love for the Father? When I look at this story I see two scenarios when it comes to our daily walk with God.

We can be like Simon, who went through the motions, and yet harbored judgment, conditional acceptance, and neglected to treat the Son of God as he should have been treated. Or we can be like the prostitute who realized the kindness of God and risked being ridiculed, who risked being judged even more, and who risked being misunderstood, just so Jesus could be thanked and honored.

There were cultural customs that the prostitute broke on this day. According to Jewish custom it was considered shameful for a woman to be seen publicly with her hair down, let alone using it to dry another man's feet. Another thing to consider is that she was unclean according to Jewish tradition and was to be avoided by the religious people of the day in order that they don't become contaminated themselves. And third, while oil or perfume was usually used to be poured over the head of an individual, the anointing of the feet was considered a waste of perfume.

The prostitute went against the norm and found freedom in expressing her love for God. One of the things that I struggled with, as a child coming from another culture, was the fact that within the church there were ordinances, ceremonies, unspoken and spoken rules that I never found in scripture but were prevalent in the American Church.

It really caused me to look at the church and ask myself if I wanted to follow suit or be myself. I found that there was a lot of un-acceptance, a lot of judgment, and instead of the love of God being the priority, it was the functioning of a small corporation known as a "Church" that was the main concern. I don't want that, do you? **We tend to get caught up with who people are, instead of what they can become with Jesus in their lives.** We can respond the same way the Simon responded when he witnessed this true and real expression of another persons remorse and sorrow, and the love for Jesus. Look at **verse 39**:

39 When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man was the prophet I thought he was, he would have known what kind of woman this is who is falling all over him."

In our ignorance we may only see the outside, we may judge it and say "here we go again" or "who do they think they are" or "we'll see if this is real or not". **1 Samuel 16:7** tells us:

"Looks aren't everything. Don't be impressed with a persons looks and stature. God judges persons differently than humans do. Men and women look at the face; God looks into the heart."

What happens within a persons heart is what matters to God. The internal should determine the external and not the other way around. Religion imposes from the outside, while relationship begins on the inside and expresses itself outwardly. God said of the religious in **Isaiah 65:5**:

5 They say, 'Keep your distance. Don't touch me. I'm holier than thou.' These people gag me. I can't stand their stench.

In our religiousness, we can become numb in our worship – by worship I mean our lifestyle for Jesus. While there are those who are finding freedom, those who are experiencing a true touch of God, those who are hearing the voice of God, those who are stepping out in faith and trusting God with all of their life, there are some of us who have allowed our faith to become nothing more than fire insurance, a title, an idea, or even a way of dealing with our guilt.

Like Simon, we may have neglected our true expression of faith in Jesus for something more civilized, more culturally acceptable, instead of living it out for all to see. We may have forgotten where we have come from, and the extent of the forgiveness of God. That is why Jesus talks to Simon in a parable, a word picture in **verses 40-43**:

*40 Jesus said to him, "Simon, I have something to tell you." "Oh? Tell me."
41 "Two men were in debt to a banker. One owed five hundred silver pieces, the other fifty. 42 Neither of them could pay up, and so the banker canceled both debts. Which of the two would be more grateful?" 43 Simon answered, "I suppose the one who was forgiven the most."*

We are all sinners, we have all fallen, we all receive the forgiveness of God no matter what we have done or ever will do, as long as we receive the work of Jesus Christ on the Cross. The degrees of the amount of forgiveness is not the issue here, it is the true realization of our forgiveness that makes us grateful. **Jesus isn't keeping tabs on who is forgiven more, but who is grateful and fully understanding of what they have been given.**

When you don't think you have a sin problem, you have lost sight of the extent of God's forgiveness. When you know you have a sin problem and you are constantly struggling with it, you realize the graciousness of God. When you become self-sufficient anything other than yourself is secondary, but when you become God dependent everything about yourself is secondary. The Pharisees eyes were on himself, while the prostitutes eyes were on Jesus. How do we know this? Look at Jesus words in our text in **verse 44-46**:

44 Then turning to the woman, but speaking to Simon, he said, "Do you see this woman? I came to your home; you provided no water for my feet, but she rained tears on my feet and dried them with her hair. 45 You gave me no greeting, but from the time I arrived she hasn't quit kissing my feet. 46 You provided nothing for freshening up, but she has soothed my feet with perfume.

It was customary for a guest's feet to be washed due to the fact that there were no paved roads in the days of Jesus and the feet would become dusty and even muddy at times. According to their culture men would greet each other with a kiss and guests were anointed with oil or perfume on their head. Each one of these standard culturally acceptable behaviors were neglected.

The humble prostitute treated Jesus the opposite of Simon. Instead of water from the ground, she gave him tears from her heart. Instead of an equal kiss on the cheek, she gave him humble kisses on his feet. And instead of cheap oil for the head, she poured precious perfumed oil on his feet.

Why did Simon neglect his duties as a host? I believe it was because of two things – Simon lost sight of who Jesus was, and how grateful he should have been. Instead of living his life out of gratitude for God's great love, he saw Jesus just another person. **When you have truly experienced the forgiveness of God you cannot help but respond in love.** Look at what Jesus says in **verse 47-48:**

47 Impressive, isn't it? She was forgiven many, many sins, and so she is very, very grateful. If the forgiveness is minimal, the gratitude is minimal." 48 Then he spoke to her: "I forgive your sins."

It is a matter of perspective isn't it? There are no degrees of sin, there is no degrees of sinners, just people who are willing to see forgiveness differently than others. The prostitute's forgiveness was valued because she knew who she was, what she had done, and knew her only hope was with Jesus. Simon's attitude was different, he saw Jesus more as a hindrance or imposition.

There are two types of people in this world, those who welcome and embrace the forgiveness of God and who never forget what he has done for them, or those who see Jesus more as an imposition to their life that stops them from doing what they really want to do. For one, Jesus grants forgiveness, to the other the challenge to change and become more grateful for who he is. David wrote in **Psalm 103:1-5:**

1 O my soul, bless God. From head to toe, I'll bless his holy name! 2 O my soul, bless God, don't forget a single blessing! 3 He forgives your sins - every one. He heals your diseases - every one. 4 He redeems you from hell - saves your life! He crowns you with love and mercy - a paradise crown. 5 He wraps you in goodness - beauty eternal. He renews your youth - you're always young in his presence.

Simon remained stuck in his religious patterns, while the prostitute found release and forgiveness from her shame. One responds with a religious response, a unscathed, unchanged reaction to the grace and mercy of God. The other, crosses culturally acceptable boundaries, wanting to express their love for God more so than being just another part of the crowd. The question for us today is which are we? And how far are we willing to show God that we love him?

The prostitute did not love Jesus to be forgiven, she loved Jesus because she was forgiven. We don't love God in order that he might forgive our debt, but we love God because he did forgive our debt. How that plays out in our lives is proof of a viable and living relationship with God. Let's Pray!